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Forms against war: the pastourelle and the Hundred Years War

Elizaveta Strakhov[1]

In one of Eustache Deschamps's ballades, *En une grant fourest et lée* (*c.*1380), the speaker, riding on horseback through the forest, comes across a group of frightened barnyard animals huddled in an enclosed space as wolves, foxes and other carnivorous forest animals prowl around them. The predators demand money as they encircle the livestock, and the barnyard animals beg for mercy. The ewe says she has been shorn four times that year (10–12), implying she has no more wool to offer at this time.[2] The sow says that she will be forced to beg in the streets along with her piglets, as she has no merchandise left to sell, to which the wolf responds that she can sell her hide (25–9). Deploying the tropes of animal husbandry, this beast allegory critiques exploitation of the rural poor by wealthy administrative elites.[3] Cornered by menacing predators, the terrified animals lend pathos to Deschamps's critique of class warfare. The gendered quality of this beast allegory, however, and its intimations of sexual violence, raise questions regarding the spectacularity of pain, both female and animal.

Deschamps's lexical choice of *brebis* [ewe] and *truie* [sow] underline that the animals foregrounded in this poem are female. They are also represented in gendered attitudes of subjection: the ewe 's'est agenoillée' [knelt down] (9) and speaks 'comme coye' [peaceably] (10), while the sow is 'desesperée' [in despair] (25), in a characterisation that recalls the Argive widows weeping on their knees in the road before Theseus at the opening of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* (*c.*1380). Their gendering introduces an extra dimension to Deschamps's critique. The overshearing of this female sheep now intimates sexual assault of her body. That sense is heightened in the

discourse of the sow, where the wolf's suggestion that she sell her hide, in the absence of other merchandise, suggests sex work.

The genre of this poem intensifies its implications of sexual violence. Deschamps's lyric opens with the phrase: 'En une grant fourest et lée / Nagaires que je cheminoie, / Ou j'ay mainte beste trouvée' [As I was walking the other day / In a forest, vast and large, / Where I came across multiple animals] (1–3). This opening formula is the calling card of the medieval pastourelle. This extremely popular genre, the oldest example of which dates from the mid-twelfth century with the work of troubadour poet Marcabru, is primarily about sexual violence against women.[4] Invariably opening with some variation on 'As I was riding the other day', it usually presents a conversation in an idealised *locus amoenus* between a young woman and a knight. The knight is trying to have sex with the young woman, sometimes by means of seduction, sometimes by means of bribery or coercion, sometimes by means of outright physical violence. In response, the woman teases, acquiesces, bargains, consents, resists, fights back or does not, or cannot. The pastourelle, of which approximately 150 are extant in Old and Middle French, features a great number of variations on this basic scenario. A second type of pastourelle consists of a dialogue between two shepherds, often a courtship scene between a shepherd and a shepherdess, also observed by the voyeuristic knight. A third branch depicts pastoral life more generally, whereby the knight observes shepherds over their meal, usually critiquing the excesses of courtly life.[5]

Deschamps's introduction of gendered violence through lexical choice and lyric form thus suggests administrative misrule to be a form of sexual abuse. The rural poor, emblematised by the animals they herd, transform into female victims of sexual violence, whose rape is further implicitly metaphorised into the rape of the land itself. Toggling between the twin poles of metaphor and metonymy, in which sheep and sows metaphorically represent women and metonymically stand in for the rural poor, Deschamps paints an affective scene of structural power imbalance and socioeconomic marginalisation.

But the ballade also complicates its own sympathies. To begin with, we inhabit the scene through the speaker's perspective, himself

on horseback in a demonstration of his noble status. Further, the ballade's opening formula uncomfortably links him to the sexual predator of the pastourelle or, at best, to the voyeuristic onlooker, ultimately just passing through. As Geri Smith has noted, French pastourelles, many of which feature extended representations of violent rape, offer ambiguous portrayals of the knight. On the one hand, as an aggressive attacker, he flagrantly defies the prescriptions of courtly love, revealing the base animality of human desire beneath his polished surface.[6] On the other, the young woman is often depicted as naive and/or sexually provocative, and the rapist knight always rides away with full impunity.[7]

In Deschamps's ballade, the portrayal of the two threatened animals embeds additional troubling cultural scripts. The image of the meekly kneeling ewe bears a sacral register, offering the animal's overshearing-as-rape the outlines of a virgin martyrdom. The sow, on the other hand, is freighted with very different connotations. Her desperation recalls the frantic squealing of a pig, as contrasted with the placid timidity of the sheep, suggesting over-emotionality. Unlike the sacral sheep, the sow is represented as a mother, thus a sexually experienced woman. Concomitantly, she is invited to perform sex work, deeply stigmatised in this period and unrelieved by the damsel-in-distress tropes present in the characterisation of the ewe. Even as Deschamps's ballade indicts the treatment of the rural poor, it also subtly reasserts gendered stereotypes regarding female sexuality.

Deschamps's choice to use abused women and hurt animals as metaphors for the rural poor is not unique to this ballade. The same rhetorical operation takes place in a group of contemporary anonymous pastourelles occurring in sequence in a single manuscript, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania MS Codex 902. These pastourelles intensify many of the elements found in Deschamps's ballade. Rather than describing general administrative corruption, however, their critique revolves around the failure to protect rural populaces against raiding enemy armies in the Hundred Years War. Proportionately, the animals are now dead, and sexual violence against women is no longer intimated, but executed. As a result, the affective register of these portrayals is amplified still more, where all three forms of violence – against the rural poor, against women and against animals – are uniformly condemned

in powerful anti-war messages. Yet, as in Deschamps's ballade above, the critique works by imagining each of these groups – killed animals, raped women and pillaged peasants – as standing in for one another in a series of overlapping figurations.

In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carol J. Adams identifies the cultural function of animals as an 'absent referent', integrally bound up with figurative language.[8] Just as the dead animal is carefully presented in the modern supermarket as a shapeless part, eliding the animality of its original body, so too language elides the animal life of the meat we are consuming: we eat *beef*, we do not eat *cow*. As long as we eat *beef*, we avoid thinking about the still-warm bodies of slaughtered cows, thus sanctioning the death of more cows; language both reasserts and conditions the violence committed upon the animal. In turn, the emphasis on separable body parts to describe women in toxic patriarchal culture – 'a piece of ass', 'I'm a legs man' – co-opts this violence by metaphorically reducing women's subjecthood to objectified flesh that can be consumed and abused, just like animal flesh. This rhetorical violence is amplified still when the idea of female rape is transferred onto other subjects, such as rape of the land, transforming the real lived experiences of sexual violence against women into loose allegorisations of violence against inanimate objects. As Adams puts it, 'through the function of the absent referent, Western culture constantly renders the material reality of violence into controlled and controllable metaphors'.[9] By disassembling the imbrication of animals with women in Western culture, Adams exposes the structural violence perpetuated by figuration present in works like Deschamps's ballade.

The Pennsylvania pastourelles anticipate Adams's critique by several centuries. They similarly investigate the affective limits of imagining the rural populace simultaneously as abused animals and as abused women. In these works, the allegorical representation of rural populations as animals is valorised by depicting them as sympathetically defenceless animals at the bottom of the food chain. Pressure on the alignment of consumed animals with consumed humans, however, creates cracks that betray the instrumentalism of this conceptual move as working not by affording animals humanity, but by denying humans theirs. That the author or compiler of the Pennsylvania pastourelles is aware of this rhetorical effect

is revealed by the introduction of the third category of figurative representation into the works: the raped woman, who is repeatedly metaphorised as a wounded sheep. Once introduced, real female suffering threatens to collapse into pure allegory in the service of portraying wartime cruelty, mirroring Deschamps's ballade above and reifying Adams's critique. The Pennsylvania pastourelles, however, problematise this simple equation. Hurt women, we learn by the end of the pastourelle cycle, may be imagined as hurt sheep, but they are also not at all like hurt sheep: their hurt is their own, and the historical reality of that hurt challenges freewheeling allegorisation. In so doing, these works briefly expose the representational aporia at the heart of their figurative project.

Figuring shepherds as their sheep

Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania MS Codex 902, a large anthology of late medieval French *formes fixes* poetry, dated to the start of the fifteenth century, opens with a set of poems copied into the first quire of the manuscript, from fol. 1r to 8r, extant only here.[10] They are composed in the Picard dialect spoken in north-eastern France and the Francophone Low Countries, a region that felt the full brunt of the Hundred Years War, particularly at the hands of Edward the Black Prince and his devastating chevauchées.[11] The neat quire-length size of the sequence and its positioning at the opening of the manuscript suggests these works' independent circulation as a stand-alone sequence or cycle.[12]

These pastourelles, possibly authored by a single person and/or, as we will shortly see, intentionally compiled into a coherent, richly interwoven cycle, are unusual for their open discussion of the Hundred Years War.[13] But if Deschamps's ballade above conflated violence against the rural poor with violence against animals and against women through discrete word choice, palimpsestically layered imagery and the use of formal tags signalling the pastourelle genre, the Pennsylvania pastourelles achieve the conflation instead through what Arthur Bahr has called 'codicological form', whereby 'the disposition of texts in a manuscript can in fact be … richly productive of aesthetic and metaphorical meaning'.[14] Instead of

layering representations, the Pennsylvania pastourelle poet or compiler arranges the pastourelles in a sequence that interweaves the genre's main thematic strands: (1) the sexual assault of a shepherdess; (2) a dialogue between two shepherds, usually a courtship scene; and (3) the pastoral scene featuring shepherds in conversation. In so doing, he confects a poetic cycle of poems that repeatedly resonate with one another's themes and, by means of this deliberate interweaving, produce a multi-pronged commentary on war, violence and figural representation.

The Pennsylvania pastourelle sequence begins its critique of the Hundred Years War by focusing on the desperation of ruined peasants, their livelihoods pillaged by passing raiders. The sequence opens with three traditional dialogic pastourelles: a touching father–son deathbed scene and two wooing scenes between shepherds that paint a picture of the simple, virtuous life of the rural poor. At this point, the cycle shifts its focus to group pastoral scenes, and, in so doing, the idyllic mood established with the first three works vanishes. After two more poems picturing pastoral scenes where shepherds lament generalised rural poverty, the cycle's sixth pastourelle, *Trois bergers d'ancien aez*, features shepherds explicitly attributing their losses to the devastations of the Hundred Years War.[15] Here two shepherds share a lengthy list, running several stanzas, of all the numerous battles and sieges that they have witnessed in the theatre of war in north-eastern France and the Low Countries. This lengthy array of names includes places like Mons-en-Pévèle (25), Tournay (50) – besieged by the English in 1340 – and Cadzand (57), raided by the English in 1337.[16]

Stressing the first few years of the Anglo-French conflict in its list of battles and sieges, *Trois bergers* also has one of the shepherds mention witnessing Edward III's original act of homage to Philip VI at his coronation in 1326 (53–5), before the outbreak of the war. The inclusion of this detail pinpoints the very origins of the Hundred Years War, while the ensuing cataclysm of events – ten in total – stresses its interminable nature. That these enumerative litanies take place as the shepherds sit for their daily midday meal suggests that the rural devastation perpetuated by warring factions has become the routine experience of a shepherd's daily life. The evocation of cyclical violence is further punctuated by the pastourelle's refrain that

metonymically aligns the beleaguered shepherds with the animals that constitute their livelihood, as different characters exclaim in variations on the phrase that they have never beheld 'un leu pour garder les oeilles' [a wolf to guard sheep]. The shepherds, attacked by pillagers, are likened unto their own sheep, attacked by wolves.

In the very next lyric in the sequence, *Madoulz li bergiers et ses fieulx*, the role of the sheep similarly toggles between literal and allegorical modes.[17] Here, a father and a son have lost their whole flock of sheep to a band of raiders and are now destitute. As in the preceding pastourelle, the enormity and cyclicality of the Anglo-French conflict and its ensuing devastation is prominently foregrounded. Madoulz spends much of the pastourelle trying to determine the identity of the raiders: was it the Navarrese (11), he asks his son, or perhaps the Flemish, or else the French (26), or perhaps the Boulonais (27)? His son's response that the raiders cried 'Saint George' (refrain) reveals their English identity to the reader, as this was the battle cry of English forces already in the late eleventh century and was particularly associated with Edward III and his war campaigns.[18] Nevertheless, Madoulz's multiple attempts to guess the raiders' identity emphasise, through the enumeration, the catastrophic situation of Picard shepherds, trapped in the middle of a brutal conflict that comes at them from all sides. Madoulz laments: 'n'est ce mie grans destrois / quant no voisin font pis que leu?' [is it not a great tragedy / When our neighbours are worse than wolves?] (43–4), again aligning himself with the animals under his charge. These two pastourelles thus achieve their sharp political critique by showcasing the geographic and temporal scale of the conflict, and this enormity is further accentuated by staging intimate enclosed scenes between friends and nuclear family members observed by an outside figure. The close relationships portrayed implicitly become the physical intimacy of a flock of sheep, huddled together against the repeated onslaught of outside forces.

Pythagoras and the Golden Age in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

The affective portrayal of the rural populace by means of their own domesticated animals is not new to late medieval literature:

John Gower's *Visio Angliae*, which serves as a prologue to his *Vox Clamantis*, similarly imagines the rural populace as cows, oxen, hogs and other barnyard animals. Gower's rural beasts, however, symbolise the perilous inversion of naturalised social hierarchies when they throw off their yokes (245–50).[19] Furthermore, their animality works to emphasise their brutality, their chaotic disorganisation in an undifferentiated herd and the lack of reason that fundamentally distinguishes humans from animals in medieval natural philosophy.[20] In the Pennsylvania pastourelles, by contrast, as in Deschamps's ballade, the animality of the shepherds seems intended instead to accentuate their suffering by highlighting the inexorability of their destruction and their sacrificial innocence. Nevertheless, this seemingly sympathetic association of shepherds with their sheep has a critical fault line, as it also works to transmute the value of human lives into the labour value of livestock.

The rhetorical slippage between the death of literal sheep and the allegorical alignment of sheep, in their dying, to humans plays a major role in Ovid's retelling of the narrative of the Four Ages at the beginning and end of the *Metamorphoses*, seminal to the Middle Ages. Importantly, as that text reveals, the equation of sheep to humans, far from dignifying the lives of animals, is instead instrumental to the processes of naturalising human social hierarchies. In Ovid's first rendition of the Four Ages myth, the Golden Age has people living off the natural bounty of the land (I.89–112) until the Silver Age sees them yoke oxen to the plough (I.123–4), while the Bronze Age features weapons (I.125–7) and the Iron Age brings war and murder (I.141–50). But in Book 15 of the same text, Pythagoras rewrites the causality of that narrative:

> At vetus illa aetas, cui fecimus aurea nomen,
> fetibus arboreis et, quas humus educat, herbis
> fortunata fuit nec polluit ora cruore.
> tunc et aves tutae movere per aera pennas,
> et lepus inpavidus mediis erravit in arvis,
> nec sua credulitas piscem suspenderat hamo:
> cuncta sine insidiis nullamque timentia fraudem
> plenaque pacis erant. (XV. 96–103)

> [But that pristine age, which we have named the golden age, was blessed with the fruit of the trees and the herbs which the ground sends forth, nor did men defile their lips with blood. Then birds plied their wings in safety through the heaven, and the hare loitered all unafraid in the tilled fields, nor did its own guilelessness hang the fish upon the hook. All things were free from treacherous snares, fearing no guile and full of peace.][21]

Animals are not a focal point in Ovid's earlier description of the Golden Age: back in Book 1 humans are depicted as foraging fruit, berries, honey and acorns in a landscape that is simply absent of animals. In Pythagoras's speech, however, animals assume centre stage, whereby their safety from any predators, including humans, becomes the main feature of the bygone Golden Age.

The Golden Age ends, Pythagoras goes on to explain, when 'non utilis auctor / victibus invidit, quisquis fuit ille, leonum / corporeasque dapes avidum demersit in alvum' [someone, an ill exemplar, whoever he was, envied the food of lions, and thrust down flesh as food into his greedy stomach] (XV.103–5). Locating the end of the Golden Age in the end of human vegetarianism, Pythagoras goes on to explain the full magnitude of this crime: 'primoque e caede ferarum / incaluisse potest maculatum *sanguine ferrum*' [it may be that, in the first place, with the killing of wild beasts the *iron* was warmed and stained *with blood*] (XV.106–7; emphasis added). This line, with its evocation of *ferrum* [iron] and *sanguine* [blood], recalls Ovid's initial description of the Iron Age, in which 'nocens *ferrum* ferroque nocentius aurum / prodierat, prodit bellum, quod pugnat utroque, / *sanguineaque* manu crepitantia concutit arma' [baneful *iron* had come, and gold more baneful than iron; war came, which fights with both, and brandished in its *bloody* hands the clashing arms] (I.141–3; emphasis added). Through these lexical resonances, the death of the first animal for human consumption echoes the murder of the first human in warfare.

Pythagoras seems to be calling for the ethical treatment of animals by elevating their deaths to those of humans. In particular, Pythagoras condemns the killing of sheep:

> quid meruistis oves, placidum pecus inque tuendos
> natum homines, pleno quae fertis in ubere nectar,
> mollia quae nobis vestras velamina lanas
> praebetis vitaque magis quam morte iuvatis? (XV.116–19)
>
> [But, ye sheep, what did you ever do to merit death, a peaceful flock, born for man's service, who bring us sweet milk to drink in your full udders, who give us your wool for soft clothing, and who help more by your life than by your death?]

Yet the sheep's privileged position in Pythagoras's denunciation of animal consumption actually works to expose the limits of Ovid's affective engagement with human-like animals. As Pythagoras elucidates, the sheep's death is especially catastrophic because, taking nothing, it freely offers two valuable things that sustain the human body: dairy products and wool. This feature renders the sheep a perfect subject of the agrarian economy as a body that consumes fuel inedible to humans and yet creates two useful products. A body completely composed of nothing but human use-value, the sheep is not then especially human-like, but simply especially useful to humans. It is that feature, rather than any similarity to humans, that renders its death deplorable.

To kill the sheep thus becomes not an ethical transgression against the animal, but an ethical transgression against humans, who depend on the numerous products afforded by the sheep's body. The real end of the Golden Age, in both versions, reveals itself to be about the sustainability of human, rather than animal, populations. In Book 1, the Golden Age ends when humans stop foraging and begin to develop scheduled crop planting and harvesting to yield more food than the land naturally gives forth. Similarly in Pythagoras's speech, the Golden Age ends when plant-based foraging becomes supplemented by the hunting of animals. From this perspective, animals are not being aligned with humans because animals are like humans but because too much animal death will eventually result in too much human death. Rather than humanise animals, Pythagoras's description ultimately underscores their subjection to humans.

But if the sheep is aligned with the human because it is a valuable unit of human economies, then its ensuing substitution for

actual humans renders those humans instrumentalised in turn as economic units, rather than as human beings. Put differently, the devastation of the rural poor matters exactly as much as the death of their sheep: not because individual lives are being ruined and lost, but because the sustainability of the broader economy totters without these labouring bodies. In this way, the Pennsylvania pastourelles reveal the cold agrarian logic behind the conflation of the rural populace with the animals in their service. Although it advances the pastourelles' political critique, this conflation underscores the courtliness of these poems where the perspective ultimately rests with the objectifying gaze of the voyeuristic knight.

The silence of the lambs

The reductive nature of imagining shepherds as the mere economic units that sustain them is further compounded by the introduction of a third element of comparison into the pastourelle cycle. After the overtly topical pastourelles revolving around the Hundred Years War, the cycle seems to switch thematic gears again by shifting back into portraying scenes of courtship between two shepherds, as in the second and third lyric in the cycle. Nevertheless, the return of the image of the hurt sheep in these courtship lyrics provocatively links the different strains of the cycle together. The eighth lyric, *Robin seoit et Maret a plains camps*, occurring just after the pastourelle about Madoulz and his son, opens with shepherd Robin conventionally wooing shepherdess Maret by arguing: 'Bien sçay que vous m'amez' [I know well that you love me] (4).[22] Maret conventionally resists, as she also does in the cycle's second lyric and as is common to the pastourelle genre more broadly. The content of her refusal, however, brings in the broader representational concerns of the cycle as a whole:

> Elle respont: 'Robert, vous ne sçavez…
> quant li leups hier emporta mon mouton,
> je le rescous, mais ains fu estranlez.
> Ne feustes pas tant hardiz ny osez
> que m'aidissiez ne qu'en eussiez corage.' (5–10)

[She responds: 'Robert, you don't know …
when the wolf carried off my sheep yesterday,
I rescued it, but it had already been strangled.
You were neither bold nor audacious enough
To have helped me nor to have found the courage to do so.']

Maret's response draws on the pastoral commonplace of good husbandry as the chief feature of the worthy shepherd. In the third lyric of the pastourelle cycle, for example, *En un friche vers un marchais*, a shepherd successfully woos a shepherdess by revealing that he knows how best to store the milk of a ewe that has recently lambed (42–4).[23]

The detail of a wolf mauling a sheep as sign of Robin's ineffective husbandry suddenly brings the spectre of violence into this ostensibly peaceful scene. Significantly, there has been no suggestion of aggression in Robin's suit thus far: the text portrays him as laughing and giving her a basket (3). In the lyric's next stanza Robin presses his suit further and is again rebuffed in increasingly starker terms: 'Robin, s'eusse esté la mourans / du leu com fu men mouton devourez, / m'eussiez esté la vie remettans / dedans le corps?' [Robin, if I had been there dying / because of the wolf, as was my devoured sheep, / would you have been there to put life back / in my body?] (27–30). Suddenly placing herself in the position of her hurt sheep, Maret amplifies the previous suggestion of violence, now presenting Robin as powerless to defend both animals and women from their predators. Towards the end of their dialogue, Maret's words become prophetic, yet her attacker does not come, like the wolf for the sheep, from the world outside. Instead, Robin's demeanour changes dramatically:

[Robin] l'ahert parmi les deux costez;
bas le rua et le baisa assez;
du seurplus tais que je n'en die oultrage.
Au relever lui dist: 'Vous baiseray je.'
Lors li respont: 'Oil, Robert, se voulez.' (60–4)

[[Robin] seizes her by both sides of her waist;
he threw her down and kissed her often;
I won't speak of the rest lest I give offence.
Upon getting back up he said to her: 'I will kiss you.'
Then she replies: 'Yes, Robert, if you wish.']

Robin's actions – grabbing Maret and throwing her down – are the conventional tropes of rape found repeatedly in other pastourelles.[24] This suggestion is further signalled by the speaker's coy demurral that he will remain silent lest he speaks of an 'oultrage', which can mean both *outrage* but also, more plainly, *forcible rape*.[25] Moreover, Maret's consent to the encounter troublingly takes place after the sexual act has clearly been completed. Suzanne Edwards discusses the prevalence of such scenes of retroactive consent to rape in pastourelles. She connects these to a contemporary legal practice that aided in dismissing sexual assault cases in court by having the woman claim retroactive consent in court to exonerate her attacker due to social pressures.[26] Maret's comparison of herself to a mauled sheep thus points not just to Robin's inefficacy as a shepherd, but to his being the wolf in the story all along.

In the opening lines of the very next lyric, *En un marchais de grant antiquité*, the voyeuristic knight, familiar to us from the politicised pastourelles earlier in the cycle, now stumbles across Robin in the following posture:

> trouvay Robin plorant sur son mouton,
> lui decorcant; a veir fu grant pité,
> et puis disoit: 'Bergiere de renon,
> qui t'a ravy ne m'ama pas granment.' (2–5)[27]
>
> [I found Robin crying over his sheep,
> flaying it, it was a great pity to behold,
> and then he said: 'Reputable shepherdess
> the one who ravished you did not much care for me.']

A friend comes by to comfort Robin over the loss of his beloved, reminding him that even Argus, for all his hundred eyes, lost his wife Io, which becomes the refrain for the lyric. The friend continues his speech of consolation with a conventional enumeration of literary exempla of other men betrayed by women, such as Adam, Samson, Aristotle, Virgil and Merlin.[28] The lyric concludes with Robin's swearing that he will never trust a woman again; the loss of the love object is now firmly reinscribed as her complicit betrayal.

Maret's disappearance from this poem, and Robin's laments over a prone sheep, resonate with Maret's comparison of herself, in the pastourelle just before, to a sheep mauled by a wolf. Similarly, that

previous pastourelle's culmination in a sexual act of fuzzy consent tracks with this text's mention of the woman's reputation and the ambiguous phrase: 'Qui t'a ravy?' [Who ravished you?], *Ravir* derives from the Latin *raptus*, a term that can mean *forcible rape*.[29] The lyric's refrain additionally references the tragic fate of Io, raped by Jupiter and subsequently turned into a domesticated barnyard animal, while the previous lyric also has Maret comparing Robin to Argus, Io's guardian (*Robin seoit et Maret a plains camps*, 36). The text thus suggests that an act of violence against a woman has been committed somewhere off-stage.

The representation of female rape as the death of a sheep, whom no shepherd can rescue from wolves, directly links these pastourelles' explorations of sexual violence against women to the earlier pastourelles that portray the shepherds' loss of sheep to raiders through the failure of good husbandry in the region. In the midday lunch scene, the old shepherds lament the disastrous appointment of wolves to guard sheep, while, in the dialogue between the father and son, Madoulz rebukes his child for failing to defend the sheep against his attackers (*Madoulz li bergiers et ses fieulx*, 12); as noted earlier, he later equates the raiders to being worse than wolves (43–4). When Maret reprimands Robin for failing to husband a hurt sheep, therefore, her words resonate with the earlier failure to protect sheep from violent raiders in the Hundred Years War. On the one hand, this conjunction implicitly reminds readers of the other historical victims, besides sheep, of wartime pillaging. In this way, it makes rhetorical space in this cycle's overt critique of the Hundred Years War for the devastating experiences of women in war, while also drawing attention to the threat of violence that women also experience from their own neighbours, friends and lovers. By highlighting the reality of widespread sexual violence against women, the Pennsylvania pastourelles offer rape victims a voice, however small, in ways that speak to Middle English and Middle Scots pastourelles, in which, as Carissa Harris has shown, the pain and anger of female victims tends to be more prominently foregrounded than in the traditional French pastourelle.[30]

At the same time, however, *raptus* is a famously ambiguous term that means not only *forcible rape*, but also *abduction*.[31] This feature

of the term aligns raped women with hurt sheep in a much more utilitarian manner, already signalled by Robin's and his friend's misogynistic responses. As Corinne Saunders has argued,

> *Raptus* of women in fact involves both kinds of theft: either sexual use of the woman's body is stolen by her attacker or her person is stolen by her abductor. Sex is thus interpreted as a commodity similar to the financial gain represented by marriage, and the definitive issue is robbery rather than trauma or violation.[32]

In this interpretation, the problem is less that women are being raped than that their rape is a theft of bodies that would otherwise labour in marriage and lawful childbirth. If a dead sheep cannot sustain humans over time with its milk and wool, then the sexually assaulted woman similarly falls out of the circulating marital economy. Just as the metonymic replacement of shepherds by their sheep ultimately revealed itself to be a warning concerning economic sustainability, so too does the woman 'ravy' [ravished] like a sheep fail to sustain the socioeconomic future of the region by becoming a body that has lost its marital value. Inasmuch as these vivid representations condemn the violence of the Hundred Years War and sexual violence against women in the terms of dangerously flawed animal husbandry, they again reduce the trauma of an assaulted woman, like the vastly different trauma of a pillaged shepherd, and the still more different trauma of a slaughtered animal, to mere economic loss.

Absent referents

The figurative representation that collapses sheep, shepherds and women together thus seems to reify Carol Adams's admonition against the structural violence levied by metaphorical language. These linguistic operations render different forms of literal trauma into allegorical vehicles that transmute historical pain into affective spectacle. Both animals and women elide into one another to point to the trauma of male shepherds, thus becoming Adams's 'absent referent'. And yet, the manner in which this substitution of animals for women for rural men is rendered rhetorically suggests

the author's or compiler's awareness that the end result of this chain of signification is an elision of subjecthood. This awareness is signalled by a foregrounding of literal absences in these texts, underscored by the speakers' heavy reliance on hypothetical constructions of events that lend the pastourelles an air of spectral irreality. In the aforementioned *Robin seoit et Maret a plains camps*, in which Maret compares herself to a wounded sheep, Maret initially denies Robin's suit by noting the sheep's attack that has happened 'hier' [yesterday] (7). Setting the attack beyond the diegesis of the pastourelle, the author turns it into an absent presence in the text. Maret freights the diegetic gap in this little story with an additional sense of failure when she insists that Robin was not able to help her: 'Ne feustes pas tant hardiz ny osez / que m'aidissiez, ne qu'en eussiez corage' [You were neither bold nor audacious enough / to have helped me nor to have found the courage to do so] (9–10).

Maret further draws attention to the breakdown of metaphoric representation in this text when she returns to the sheep again:

> Robin, s'eusse esté la mourans
> du leu com fu men mouton devourez,
> m'eussiez esté la vie remettans
> dedans le corps? A ce me respondez. (27–30)
>
> [Robin, if I had been there dying
> Because of the wolf, as was my devoured sheep,
> Would you have been there to put life back
> In my body? Answer me that.]

Using the subjunctive mode to underscore this hypothetical, Maret draws overt attention to the slippage between literal and figurative husbandry on which the cycle of pastourelles hinge as a whole. If the shepherd's occupation requires knowledge of healing wounded animals, she asks, how might that husbandry really work in the situation metaphorised by the wolf's attack, namely, a woman's rape? Is a wounded woman's body really the same as that of a sheep? More generally, how does a man – or any outside person, for that matter – restore a woman's body after rape, particularly in a society that views raped bodies as permanently damaged? Maret's question, stretching husbandry thin, exposes the lie at the heart of representing raped women as hurt sheep by drawing attention to

the disjuncture between physical trauma, psychic trauma and social trauma that renders female rape fundamentally *un*like other forms of bodily assault, especially in a culture that values virginity.

The pastourelle's deconstruction of the lack in its own use of metaphoric language finds its troubling echo in the ambiguity of Robin's and Maret's sexual encounter towards the end of the poem. In fulfilment of Maret's portrayal of Robin's hypothetical bad husbandry, Robin's actions are described using the literary tropes of sexual assault, as we saw above. They culminate, however, in that moment of ostensible consent, itself rendered more ambiguous still by its use of future tense: 'Au relever lui dist: "Vous baiseray je." / Lors li respont: "Oil, Robert, se voulez"' [Upon getting up he said: "I will kiss you." / Then she replies: "Yes, Robert, if you wish"] (64–5). Rather than depict a present, this moment offers but a proleptic granting of consent on Maret's part for an assault that has already – inexorably – taken place. The prolepsis is further underscored by that conditional 'if you wish', amplifying the abstract nature of this scene.

In the cycle's very next pastourelle, as we recall, both tenor and vehicle of the metaphor linking sheep with women are absent from the text. The pastourelle's knight finds Robin crying over a sheep that he is possibly skinning, suggesting that the animal, like Maret's earlier sheep from 'hier' [yesterday], is already dead, while addressing a shepherdess who has been 'ravy' [ravished], again beyond the diegesis of the text. Robin's grief continues to showcase the slippage between literal and figurative husbandry that animates the whole cycle, as he is simultaneously revealed to be a bad husband to his dead sheep and bad husband to his raped love interest. More significantly, this pastourelle has a dead animal, absently present inside the text, standing in for a woman, who is herself absent from the text. At once standing in and literally unable to stand in for one another, the hurt sheep and the raped woman are revealed to be blank ciphers dooming the entire project of metaphorically representing animals as women as rural men to linguistic collapse. Resonating powerfully with Adams's idea of the 'absent referent' through their literal absence, these pastourelles suggest the author's awareness that signification here works only through the erasure of its subjects.

That said, these lyrics' examination of the affective limitations of their figural project is also ultimately banished by the end of the cycle. Linguistic and diegetic order is restored when Maret finds herself faced with a far less ambiguous sexual situation that has a clear resolution. In the very last pastourelle of the cycle, *Decha Brimeu sur un ridel*, Maret is approached by a different shepherd named Brun, and the exchange between the characters contrasts starkly with Robin's and Maret's earlier dialogue.[33] If Robin was at least attempting eloquence by comparing Maret's beauty to that of various literary exempla, Brun simply opens his mouth and says: 'Trop vous aim par especial' [I really like you a lot] (10), and offers her a piece of cake.[34] After he is rebuffed, this new suitor throws himself on top of Maret, who begins to scream before Robin runs in and beats Brun 'si qu'a poy ne le fist crever' [so that he just barely did not kill him] (61). In this final pastourelle of the cycle, Robin's husbandry does prove effective after all, when his violence is redirected onto the correct target, a violent sexual attacker, rather than his love object. The cycle ends with sexual violence against women being explicitly pointed out to the reader, condemned and successfully quashed. Women can get rescued by their lovers from the violence of other men, men's violence can be both curbed and controlled, and the cycle ends on an optimistic note that dismisses the ambiguity of its preceding content. But even as we leave the cycle reassured of Maret's safety through Robin's newfound good husbandry, the wolf of flawed figural representation, having been introduced to the lyric enclosure, cannot be banished quite as easily; he stalks the borders, always perhaps just out of sight.

Conclusion

This striking cycle of lyrics offers an important glimpse into courtly pastoral writing that explicitly concerns itself – or attempts to concern itself – with the lives of the poor, marginalised and underprivileged. The pastoral mode, even when used for political critique, rarely treats actual pastoral subjects: instead, it commonly allegorises aristocratic figures as shepherds and shepherdesses, such as in the anonymous fifteenth-century *Pastoralet* (1422–5),

or else sublimates them into Christian allegory, as in William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (*c.*1370–90). In the Pennsylvania pastourelles, by contrast, the rural peasants actually seem to represent themselves, as these works depict their daily lives, diet, clothing and wartime experiences. Instead of allegorically standing in for other populations, institutions or cultural phenomena, the peasants signify themselves, and the operations of metaphor are displaced onto other groups instead, namely barnyard animals and women, whose experiences of pain and death now point to those of the peasants. But tracing this displacement from animals to women to peasants allows us to see, in turn, that the peasants do not really represent themselves either: instead, all three groups are revealed to matter because they are discrete units of property in overlapping economies. From this perspective then, even as these pastourelles' peasants represent historical peasants, rather than allegorised others, their portrayal nevertheless exposes the rural population's fundamental objectification into economic metaphor in late medieval society.

The challenges of ethical representation, readily discernible in the rhetorical slippage between sheep and women, thus also encompasses the rural peasants themselves, suggesting an aporia at the very heart of the courtly poetic project to represent the suffering of the marginalised, non-courtly subject during war. In a sense, that aporia extends to any project of writing about any war, even when personally lived or experienced, because living through war is a fundamentally untranslatable experience. And yet, these works do remain powerfully affective: we are moved by Madoulz and his son weeping together in the midst of their destroyed property, we are pained by the peasants placidly eating their midday meal as they recount endless cycles of violence, we are shocked by Robin's assault of Maret, and we are chilled by him weeping over his dead sheep. The Pennsylvania pastourelles blur their historical marginalised subjects into pure metaphor, and yet the metaphors do offer a pathos that enhances the critique of war, as we also saw in Deschamps's work at the beginning of this piece.

Deschamps's entire poetic identity, in fact, is forged from the Hundred Years War. Originally known as Eustache Morel, Deschamps changed his name to honour his home estate, which

he had named the 'Maison des champs' or 'House of the Fields', after it was pillaged and burnt down by English soldiers in the chevauchées.[35] In this way, Deschamps embedded his historical experiences of wartime loss into the name, by which we continue to know the poet today, thus turning a destroyed unit of his own property into a metaphor for his entire poetic identity. Deschamps's manoeuvre, oddly congruent with the operations of the Pennsylvania pastourelles, suggests back in the fourteenth century what we recognise to be true after seven more centuries of global warfare: metaphoric displacement is one of the key strategies that helps us narrate our own and our loved ones' experiences of surviving violence to ourselves and to the world and to be moved by them, even when we fail to do them representative justice.

Notes

1 Earlier versions of this chapter were presented at the Medieval Academy of America in 2018 and the Midwest Middle English Reading Group in autumn 2019. I am greatly indebted to my audiences for their rich feedback, as well as to R. D. Perry, Daniel Davies and the volume's reader.

2 Text in Deschamps, *Oeuvres*, ed. Queux de St-Hilaire and Raynaud, vol. 3, 56–7, reproduced with slight modifications and cited parenthetically by line number. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

3 On this tradition, see esp. Cooper, *Pastoral*, 75–9; see further, O'Neill, 'Counting Sheep'.

4 See Zink, *Pastourelle*; Cooper, *Pastoral*, 47–71; Blanchard, *Pastorale*, 15–89; Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens*, 104–21; Smith, *Medieval French Pastourelle*, 17–69; Harris, *Obscene Pedagogies*, 103–49, and, most recently, Baechle, Harris and Strakhov (eds), *Rape Culture*, which centres on the pastourelle and related genres.

5 See Cooper, *Pastoral*, 48–58; Blanchard, *Pastorale*, 17–27; and Smith, *Medieval French Pastourelle*, 23–5; these are also sometimes termed 'bergeries'.

6 Smith, *Medieval French Pastourelle*, 41–5.

7 Zink, *Pastourelle*, 56–7, 117–18; Smith, *Medieval French Pastourelle*, 50.

8 Adams, *Sexual Politics*, 20–1.

9 Adams, *Sexual Politics*, 22.
10 On this manuscript, its provenance and organisation, see Strakhov, *Continental England*, 35–46. Almost entirely unknown to scholarship, these pastourelles have been edited in Kibler and Wimsatt, 'Development'; discussed in Wimsatt, 'Froissart, Chaucer'; and mentioned passim in Kendrick, 'L'Invention', 173 n. 24.
11 On these, see Sumption, *Hundred Years War II*, 405–54.
12 On traces of exemplars suggesting independent circulation of texts in longer anthologies, see in particular Boffey and Thompson, 'Anthologies and Miscellanies'.
13 The only other pastourelles to discuss events of the Hundred Years War are the pastourelles of Jean Froissart and several short works by Deschamps that deploy conventional pastourelle elements, as seen in *En une grant fourest et lée* above. Froissart's pastourelles are edited in McGregor (ed.), *Lyric Poems*; on them, see in particular, Blanchard, *Pastorale*, 74–89; Smith, *Medieval French Pastourelle*, 118–82. Deschamps's pastourelle-esque ballades and chants royaux are edited in Deschamps, *Oeuvres*, ed. Queux de St-Hilaire and Raynaud, vol. 3, 1–3, 45–9, 51–3, 62–4 and 93–5, and his *Lai de Franchise* in vol. 2, 203–14 (see Blanchard, *Pastorale*, 68–74); see also vol. 3, 7–9 and 178–80 for ballades using animals in pastourelle-esque ways, as discussed above. Close textual parallels between the pastourelles of Codex 902, those of Froissart, and the aforementioned works of Deschamps suggest their connections to one another: see further Strakhov, *Continental England*, 49–63.
14 Bahr, 'Reading Codicological Form', 220–1.
15 Text in Kibler and Wimsatt, 'Development', 50–4. All citations from this poem and all others in the sequence will be parenthetical by line number.
16 See Kibler and Wimsatt, 'Development', 50–3 (notes to relevant lines).
17 Text in Kibler and Wimsatt, 'Development', 54–8.
18 See further Curry, *Battle of Agincourt*, 274–5; De Laborderie, 'Richard the Lionheart'.
19 Text in Gower, *Poems*, ed. Carlson; cited parenthetically by line number. On this work, see, in particular, Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 208–18; Aers, '*Vox populi*'; Salisbury, 'Violence'; Carlson, 'Gower's Beast Allegories'; Nolan, 'Poetics of Catastrophe'; and Cornelius, 'Gower'.
20 For a good overview on medieval understandings of the distinction between human and animal bodies and their relationship to reason, see Steel, *How to Make a Human*.

21 Text and translation in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Miller, rev. Goold, with minor modifications.
22 Text in Kibler and Wimsatt, 'Development', 58–61, with minor modifications.
23 Text in Kibler and Wimsatt, 'Development', 43–5.
24 See Smith, *Medieval French Pastourelle*, 33–4.
25 See definition B.2b for *oultrage* in the *Dictionnaire du moyen français (1330–1500)*, www.atilf.fr/dmf/ [accessed 3 June 2021].
26 Edwards, 'Rhetoric of Rape'.
27 Text edited in Kibler and Wimsatt, 'Development', 61–3, with minor modifications. Kibler and Wimsatt give the word in line 3 as 'decortant', which does not seem attested, though they do connect it tentatively with OF *escorcier* [to flay] in the line notes. Taken as 'decorcant', however, it becomes an attested variant of *descorcher*, with the same meanings in *The Anglo-Norman Dictionary*: https://anglo-norman.net/entry/deschorcher [accessed 3 June 2021].
28 In the anti-feminist tradition, devious women hang Virgil from a basket, bridle Aristotle and trap Merlin; all three figures are commonly invoked as exempla of men outwitted by feminine deceit: for Virgil, Berlioz, 'Virgile'; for Aristotle, Morrison and Heckman (eds), *Imagining the Past*, 295–6 and associated bibliography. For the anti-feminist tradition more broadly, see Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*.
29 See the useful overview in Saunders, 'Woman Displaced', 118–23; Cannon, '*Raptus*'. Cannon's argument excavates contemporary legal uses of the term *raptus* to show that it can mean 'forcible rape' in the late Middle Ages in an attempt to elucidate Cecily Champaigne's famous charge of *raptus* against Geoffrey Chaucer. New documentary discoveries by Roger and Sobecki ('Geoffrey Chaucer, Cecily Chaumpaigne') have further clarified that this particular use of *raptus* does not suggest sexual violence but rather revolves around a labour dispute. Nevertheless, Cannon's analysis of the term in other documentary contexts remains relevant and important.
30 See Harris, *Obscene Pedagogies*, 103–20.
31 See Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, 33–75; Edwards, 'Rhetoric of Rape'.
32 Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, 81.
33 Text in Kibler and Wimsatt, 'Development', 73–5.
34 Cf. the topos of bribing women for sex: Smith, *Medieval French Pastourelle*, 28–31.
35 See further Butterfield, *Familiar Enemy*, 136–7.